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WORK ROLES AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF FARM WIVES

BY

© JUDITH A. BALLANTYNE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTERS OF SCIENCE IN FAMILY STUDIES

FACULTY OF HOME ECONOMICS

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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ABSTRACT

Work role accumulation and mental health in farm wives on Alberta grain farms was investigated using the hypothesis that increases in the number and content of work roles influence mental health through the intervening variables of role strains and role rewards. In this study, neither amount of time spent in any work role nor amount of help received from family members predicted mental health. Farm wives with off-farm employment did not differ in mental health from those without off-farm employment. Mental health in both groups was predicted by reduced role strain and increased personal satisfaction from farming.

Role strain was predicted by the conditions of much farm work and any off-farm work, and by the condition of much household work combined with no off-farm work. Number, age, and sex of children and husband's hourly contribution to household work added little to the explanation of role strain. Women who did little household work reported little satisfaction from household work, and women who did little farm work reported little satisfaction from farm work.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

An important social trend during the past half century has been the increasing participation of married women in the labour force (Bernard, 1972; Burke & Weir, 1976; Freudinger, 1983; Wright, 1978). Concern about the effects of this trend has spurred considerable research into differences in well-being between employed wives and housewives. This research has been guided by two different viewpoints on women and work, and the resulting literature reflects these two opposing perspectives.

The first of these viewpoints is that women who work only in the home are in some way disadvantaged. They report greater health problems, including mental health problems, than do married men or single women of the same age (Bernard, 1972; Gove & Tudor, 1973; Northcott, 1980, 1981). Housework lacks recognition as a job, and women who do it are socially devalued (Council on Rural Development Canada, 1979; Ferree, 1976b; Oakley, 1974). Housewives are expected to subsist on social approval, are induced by moral pressure to perform tasks that others do not wish to do, and are expected to provide service to those who are more powerful in the community through what Galbraith (1973) calls "convenient social virtue" (Council on Rural Development Canada, 1979). In this view, being a housewife is restricting, demeaning, and

demoralizing. Women are advised to seek jobs in the labour market, for, as Jessie Bernard says, "being a housewife makes women sick" (1972, p. 48).

The opposing view is that women who work outside the home are disadvantaged. Proponents of this view believe that women's primary function is a family function; that the most important roles for women are those of wife and mother. Gove and Peterson report being "struck by the fact that many writers still see the traditional, expressive, noninstrumental, full-time homemaker as the appropriate life arena for the American wife and mother" (1980, p. 63). Oakley (1974) sees this as a historical sexist bias in sociology. Those who believe women should restrict themselves to a household role can point to statistics on mortality and morbidity, which show that men die earlier than women and are more subject to stress-related illnesses such as heart disease, as evidence that employment is harmful (Statistics Canada, 1979). Employment is doubly harmful for wives because they have added a work role rather than exchanged work roles, and are thus subject to considerable role strain from overwork and role conflicts (Meissener, Humphreys, Meis & Scheu, 1975).

Urban Women and Work

Most of the studies of women and work have used either urban samples or large national random samples. The results of this research are somewhat inconclusive; but, in general, it appears that there are few differences in the mental health of housewives and employed wives in samples in which urban women predominate (Gove & Peterson, 1980; Keith &

Schafer, 1985; Warr & Parry, 1982; Wright, 1978). Nonetheless, Keith and Schafer (1985) caution against assuming that the mental health of employed wives and housewives is fostered by the same conditions. They recommend study of the conditions that are related to mental health for each group, and of how the two groups differ and are similar with respect to those conditions.

Another concern is that conclusions based on these studies may not reflect the experiences of women in unique family and work situations. One such group of women is farm wives. Farm wives present a special challenge to research on women and work because most of them do farm work in addition to household work. Farm wives who are employed off the farm are likely to have three work roles: household, farm, and off-farm employment.

Farm Women and Work

Most North American farms are family enterprises (Statistics Canada, 1982a, 1982b; Wilkening, 1981). The wives and children on these farms have traditionally been involved in the work of farming, and this involvement has been seen as necessary for the economic survival of the farming unit (Hedley, 1981). Farm families are judged in their communities by their willingness to work hard and to put the needs of the enterprise before personal desires (Kohl, 1976). Thus, farming can be described as a "greedy occupation" (Handy, 1978), an "absorptive occupation" (Kantor, 1977), or a "two-person career" (Papanek, 1973)--a demanding occupation which requires great commitments from not only the farmer, but from the farmer's spouse and other family members as well.

There are many ways for farm wives to contribute to the economic viability of their farms. They may own land which they manage themselves or turn over to their husbands for management. They may contribute their labour by participation in the work of farm production or by efficient management of the farm household. They may contribute cash through involvement in paid off-farm work.

The contributions that farm wives make to the operation of farms in Canada and the United States are well documented. The authors of the Rural Women's Study state that "being associated with a family enterprise is virtually synonymous with being an active contributor" (Council on Rural Development Canada, 1979, p. 13). Wives contribute one-sixth to one-quarter of the total labour on family farms in the United States, or about one-third the amount of labour contributed by their husbands. Farm productivity is greater on farms where wives are not employed off-farm than those where they are, a difference which can be explained in terms of the availability of the wife for farm labour inputs (Coughenour & Swanson, 1983; Lyson, 1985). Wives are involved in a great variety of farm tasks, including field work, chores, decision-making, and record-keeping (Council on Rural Development Canada, 1979; Ireland, 1983; Jones & Rosenfeld, 1981; Keating & Doherty, 1985; Scholl, 1982; Wilkening, 1979, 1981). Maret and Copp (1982) consider unpaid farm labour the wife's greatest economic contribution to the family farm.

In addition to these direct inputs to farm production, farm wives contribute what Fassinger and Schwarzweller refer to as "hidden factors

of production" (1982, p. 4). One such factor is efficient household management, which helps to maximize family time for farm production tasks. Another is household production of goods and services, which reduces the need for cash income and frees farm income for reinvestment in farm production.

Increasingly, however, off-farm employment income has been required to supplement farm income on family-scale farms; and increasingly, farm women have taken off-farm work (Scholl, 1983). In a 1980 national survey of American farm women, 31% of the wives were employed off the farm at the time of the interviews (Jones & Rosenfeld, 1981). Similar employment rates are reported for Canadian farm wives (Council on Rural Development Canada, 1979; Ireland, 1983; Keating & Doherty, 1985; Koski, 1982). The majority of the women in these surveys reported that they worked as a result of financial need; that is, as a necessary contribution to farm family income.

Farm wives who take off-farm jobs may not necessarily relinquish on-farm responsibilities. Of the employed wives in the 1980 National Farm Women Survey in the United States, almost three-quarters were involved in what Scholl (1983) refers to as the "farm women's triad of roles," having significant household, farm, and off-farm work responsibilities. Similar multiple work role involvements are reported among Canadian women (Council on Rural Development Canada, 1979; Ireland, 1983; Keating & Doherty, 1985; Koski, 1982). In a study of the work patterns of farm wives in mid-Michigan, Fassinger and Schwarzweller (1982) found that wives' off-farm employment had little effect on the

amount of household or farm work done. The employed wives in Koski's (1982) study and the Rural Women's Study (Council on Rural Development Canada, 1979) reported fewer hours spent on home and farm tasks, but more hours spent in total work activities than did those without off-farm work.

Justification for the Study

Little is known about the consequences of these work patterns for farm women. Given the need for farm wives' contributions, and the emerging pattern of off-farm employment in addition to household and farm work for many of them, it seems important to investigate the consequences of work role accumulation for farm wives.

It is generally conceded that the addition of roles increases demands on an individual. Women in dual-career families in particular are subjected to considerable role strain as a result of their workstyle (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). Skinner (1980) concludes that the costs of career employment will be particularly high for wives of men in "greedy occupations." Role conflicts and strain are associated with decreases in mental health as measured by psychosomatic stress symptoms in women (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1984, 1985; Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan & Mullan, 1981). Farm wives with multiple work roles would, therefore, appear to be at increased risk of impaired mental health from overload and role strain.

Nevertheless, individuals have varying tolerances for and abilities to manage work and cope with work-related conflict; and work, itself, may offer rewards which offset strains and protect against symptoms of

impaired mental health (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Sieber, 1974; Stryker & Macke, 1978). Farm women report satisfaction with all their work roles (Council on Rural Development Canada, 1979; Keating & Doherty, 1985), and there is some indication that an off-farm job may help farm wives deal with stress (Ireland, 1983).

In addition, it may be that the factors which predict mental health are quite different for farm wives with and without off-farm jobs. Information about conditions which are helpful or problematic for women in each group could help them plan their work lives, anticipate difficulties, and marshall needed supports.

While there is a large body of literature on role strains, satisfactions, and mental health in urban women, little exists on rural women. No systematic studies relating work roles to the mental health of farm wives with off-farm work are reported in the literature. In addition, with the notable exception of Keating and Doherty (1985), little research has been published on work and health in farm families in western Canada. Since the cultural expectations of farm families and farm labour demands vary by type of farm and by region (Buttel & Gillespie, Jr., 1982; Kohl, 1976), the results of studies of other farming populations may not be relevant for Alberta grain farm families.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between work patterns and the mental health of wives living on grain farms in the province of Alberta, Canada. It poses the following research

question: what is the relationship between work role accumulation and the mental health of farm wives? In particular,

1. Do farm wives with and without off-farm employment differ in mental health?
2. What work-related variables predict mental health of each of these two groups?

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The relationship between work role accumulation and the mental health of farm wives will be investigated in this study using theories of role conflict, role strain, and role accumulation. Sieber defines a role as "a pattern of expectations which apply to a particular social position and which normally persist independently of the personalities occupying the position" (1974, p. 569). These expectations are experienced as demands for performance. Role accumulation, then, is the accumulation of patterns of expectations or demands for behaviour which accompany the accumulation of social positions. The social positions that are relevant to this study are work positions. The patterns of expectations and demands are those that are related to particular kinds of work: household work, farm work, and off-farm work.

Work

Work, in the North American context, is often defined as productive market activity. Beck (1983) argues that the definition of work must be broadened to include the nonmarket productive activities of household labour. She further argues that the term "productive activities" should be replaced because it excludes much of the household labour in parenting.

In this study, work is broadly defined as the constructive activity associated with the demands of particular roles. These are the household work role, the farm work role, and the off-farm work role.

Work Role Accumulation

Work role accumulation, or the accumulation of work demands, is conceptualized as occurring in two ways in this study. It can occur through the addition of a particular work role, or it can occur through increases in time spent in any work role.

A concept associated with work role accumulation is flexibility of scheduling. One of the ways to deal with accumulating work demands is to priorize them and deal with them serially. When this is not possible, demands at any one time can be said to accumulate.

Two theoretical perspectives underlie the study of role accumulation. These perspectives, which Marks (1977) has termed the "scarcity" approach and the "expansion" approach, parallel the concerns found in the literature about women and work. In the scarcity approach, multiple roles are seen as a source of psychological stress and social instability because they multiply the demands made on limited personal resources. In the expansion approach, personal resources are seen as expandable, and multiple roles are believed to increase the resources available to individuals for meeting role obligations. Proponents of the scarcity approach organize their arguments around the concepts of role conflicts and role strain: proponents of the expansion approach organize their arguments around the concepts of rewards and gratifications.

Role Conflict

Concerns about role conflict arise out of a number of theoretical frameworks. Stryker and Macke (1978), in their review of the literature on status inconsistency and role conflict, discuss the insights offered by both the structuralists and the interactionists.

The structuralists are concerned about structurally competing demands of different roles and structurally competing demands of various parts of a role set. Role conflicts are caused by "simultaneous occupancy of conflicting structural positions" (Stryker & Macke, 1978, p. 70), each with relatively invariant role expectations. These role demands are not easily modified because of their functional importance, so social systems must evolve which minimize conflict-generating role patterns. Role conflict is also possible because any holder of a status position is involved in a set of relationships, and the demands of each part of the role-set can conflict; for example, teachers must be superordinate to students and subordinate to principals. Individuals faced with structurally competing demands reduce role conflict by becoming role specialists and abandoning some roles or by ignoring, compartmentalizing, or avoiding some of the role demands.

In contrast, interactionists see structure as arising out of rather than dictating interaction. Interactionist concerns about role conflict are centered on the interpersonal negotiation of the expectations for a role. Lack of clarity or interpersonal conflict about the demands of a role make subsequent interaction problematic. Disagreement about expectations can disturb an individual's view of self. The demands of

the role may threaten self-concept, as can the loss of a valued role. Solutions to these interactional role conflicts include redefining self or situation, negotiating a role bargain, ignoring the problem, leaving a relationship, or avoiding demands.

Role Strain

In his classic paper on role strain, Goode (1960) presented the scarcity approach to multiple roles. Role strain refers to the individual's experience of role conflicts. It is "felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations" (Goode, 1960, p. 483), or "the stress generated within a person when he or she either cannot comply or has difficulty complying with the expectations of a role or set of roles" (Burr, Leigh, Day & Constantine, 1979, p. 57). Goode (1960) believes that individuals have difficulty in fulfilling role obligations because they are involved in many different role relationships with many competing and conflicting obligations. He believes that role strain is the normal and inevitable outcome of multiple roles and their attendant role conflicts, and uses an economic or exchange model to explain how individuals manage role strain. In order to reduce role strain to manageable proportions, individuals must either control the number of role relationships they engage in or attempt to strike a series of beneficial "role bargains" in interaction with their role partners.

Individuals must make "role bargains" to reduce role strain because they have limited resources such as time, energy, emotions, skills, and goods to allocate to alternative role relationships. These limited resources must be allocated in a way that satisfies the demands of the

roles at the least "cost" to the individual. The "role price" varies depending on what the individual feels is an adequate performance, what he believes his role partner will accept, and what interested third parties or the wider social network will be prepared to enforce. One method of reducing "costs" is to expand role relations so that others will make fewer demands for performance, but Goode (1960) believes that this is a limited option: any possible initial reduction in demands would soon be offset by the increases from the added roles. Role accumulation can be expected to increase role demands, which will increase conflicts, and thus increase strain.

Attempts to reduce strain by eliminating roles may be problematic for a number of reasons. While reducing the number of roles may reduce role strain, it may also reduce an individual's self-image. Social pressure may be brought to bear to keep individuals in roles. Finally, loss of roles may impair an individual's ability to strike satisfactory "role bargains" (Goode, 1960).

Rewards of Role Accumulation

Sieber (1974) challenges Goode's (1960) assumption that multiple roles are a source of psychological stress. In his critique of Goode's (1960) theory of role strain, he separates the sources of strain into the two problems of overload and role conflict. He uses the concept of overload to refer to constraints imposed by time, which he sees as equivalent to Goode's (1960) concern about the time and place specificity of demands and the finiteness of role resources. He uses the term role conflict to refer to discrepant expectations irrespective

of time pressures. In his usage, overload is analogous to the structuralists' interrole conflict, and role conflict is analogous to the interactionists' interpersonal conflict.

Sieber (1974) states that role strain, as used by Goode (1960), is a premise which has not been empirically established, and that studies which have investigated role strain have neglected the equally possible outcome of gratification. He believes that any appropriate test of Goode's (1960) theory must distinguish between conflict from overload and conflict from discrepant expectations, must consider the roles that might be involved and the status attached to the roles, and must measure both net psychological outcome and social stability.

Sieber states that there are four types of positive outcomes related to role accumulation: role privileges, overall status security, resources for status enhancement and role performance, and enrichment of the personality and ego gratification (1974, p. 569). He believes that these outcomes can reduce personal and interpersonal tension.

Privileges. Role privileges are the rights which attend a social position. They are not performance rewards, but instead are things that are due an incumbent simply for holding a position; for example, the chair of a committee sets the agenda for meetings. Sieber states that "insofar as liberties provide gratification in addition to performance rewards, afford leeway in the meeting of role expectations, and protect ego from exploitation, they may be considered as more than compensating for any strains emanating from multiple role-playing as well as precluding a certain amount of such strain" (1974, p. 571).

Overall Status Security. Multiple roles also buffer against failure in any one role. Relationship support, resources, and assistance can flow from successful roles to compensate for losses and help renew efforts in less successful ones. Such buffers can support those who attempt ventures with some risk involved, but can also support those who experience "unpredictable or uncontrollable changes" (Sieber, 1974, p. 573) in an established role relationship. Sieber (1974) uses the economic analogy of a diversified investment portfolio, in which a given amount of money is divided among investments, to explain both how roles can be added without overload and how gains from one role can offset losses from another. Even where added roles bring overload and conflict, these costs may be offset by the psychological and social benefits of buffering.

Resources. Resources for status enhancement and role performance are described as perquisites which, like privileges, are essentially unearned. These include professional and business connections, social contacts, access to resources owned by others, and access to information. These perquisites can, in turn, be used to meet obligations in other roles, and to enhance one's power base in society. Moreover, as holders of additional and transferable resources, multiple role holders become more valuable to role partners and better able to strike beneficial "role bargains." Sieber (1974) believes that these increases in rank and indispensibility will offset increases in overload and role conflict.

Self-Concept. Sieber (1974) notes that role accumulation results in wide and varied contact with other people. This brings exposure to increased information and divergent viewpoints, and a reduction in boredom. It creates the opportunity for developing tolerance and flexibility in dealing with others, and may be essential to mental health. There may be ego-gratification in knowing that one is needed by many role partners. Finally, seeing oneself as busy, involved, and competent may increase self-esteem. All of these improvements in self-concept may compensate for the added strain of extra roles.

Sieber (1974) does not deny the existence of overload and interpersonal role conflict, but believes that the theory of roles must include the equally important concept of role rewards. He believes that such rewards must be considered in any test of outcomes of role accumulation, particularly outcomes related to mental health.

Multiple Identities. Thoits (1983) argues that multiple roles are important because they create multiple identities for individuals. Added roles bring added reciprocal role relationships from which the individual forms self-definitions. The requirements of roles give meaning and direction to life. Since a sense of self (who one is) and sense of purpose (what one does) are necessary for mental health, identity accumulation enhances psychological well-being.

Commitment. Marks (1977) sees time and energy as outcomes of role bargains rather than as scarcities that constrain role performance. For him, the crucial element is commitment to roles. Commitment is a result of enjoyment of role performance, loyalty to role partners, anticipation

of perceived rewards, and avoidance of perceived punishment. Commitment increases the energy available for performance, and encourages more efficient use of time to free it up for desired activities. He observes that we have time and energy for those things that are important to us. He further suggests that increasing one's claims on another's time and energy may really be a covert complaint about the other's level of commitment to a relationship. Overload, conflict, and strain are the result of unbalanced commitments rather than too many commitments, and unbalanced commitments are the result of a societal value hierarchy which makes some roles more valuable than others.

A Model of Role Accumulation and Mental Health

Burr et al. (1979) developed a model of role strain which synthesizes many of these theoretical concerns. It identifies discrepant expectations, lack of clarity of expectations, and overload (as amount of and incompatibility of prescribed activities) as antecedents of role strain. Role accumulation is hypothesized as an antecedent of overload: diversification of roles is hypothesized as an antecedent of discrepant expectations. Role rewards flow directly from role accumulation and buffer strain from overload.

While this model meets many of Sieber's (1974) criteria for an adequate test of role strain theory, it is deficient in terms of his theoretical argument in three ways. First, Sieber claims that rewards may outweigh strain from both overload and interpersonal conflicts, resulting in net gratification; therefore, it seems reasonable to propose a model in which rewards have a direct effect on outcome.

Second, Sieber argues that multiple roles buffer strains from both overload and interactional role conflict, so the model must allow for interactions with both. Finally, since Sieber is interested in net effects, the model should include some outcome measure of net mental health which is conceptually independent of role strain and role rewards.

A model for assessing the relationship between work role accumulation and the mental health of farm wives which synthesizes the work of Burr et al. (1979) and Sieber (1974) is presented in Figure 1. According to this model, if farm wives add an off-farm work role to their housework and farm work roles, they can expect to experience strain from both structural sources and interactional sources. Structural strain is the result of conflicts due to excessive, competing demands. Interactional strain is from discrepant expectations, and may be the result of either self-role disjunctions or lack of consensus on roles between role partners. Role strain from either source will compromise mental health. Rewards can also be expected from added roles, and these rewards will have a positive effect on mental health. There will be an interaction between rewards and strains in predicting mental health.

Mental Health

An important qualification of the concept of mental health as it is used in this study is necessary. The definition of mental health is a complex theoretical issue. In practice, mental health is often viewed as a continuum ranging from less than adequate health to more than

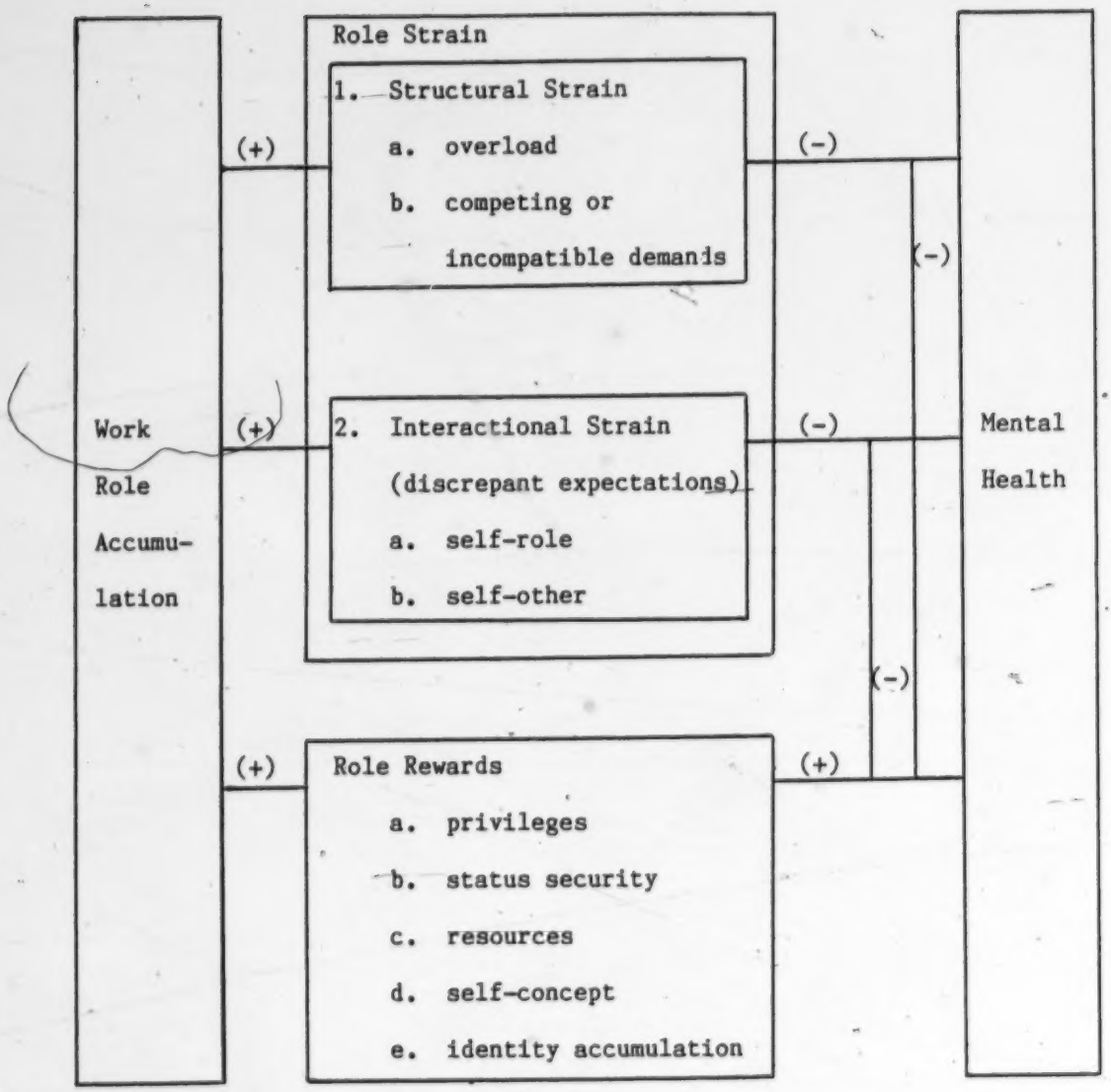

Figure 1. A model relating work role accumulation to mental health.

adequate health. Warr and Parry (1982), in their review of the literature on paid employment and women's psychological well-being, divided measures of mental health into six types: suicide and attempted suicide, diagnosed psychiatric illness, psychiatric morbidity, psychological distress, life satisfaction or happiness, and positive well-being.

Role strain should be associated with deficits in mental health; however, since theories of role strain do not predict the outcome of serious psychiatric impairment, the outcome of interest in this study is psychological distress. Therefore, the definition of mental health in this study is the absence of symptoms of psychological distress. An example of a measure of psychological distress is Langner's (1962) twenty-two item screening scale, which was designed to provide a rough indication of where people lie on a continuum of impairment in life functioning due to very common types of symptoms.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature on both urban and rural women was reviewed for findings on the relationship between work and mental health, with attention given to the theoretically important variables of work role accumulation, role conflicts, role strains, role rewards, and mental health. Literature related to these concepts is summarized here. The first section includes literature on the relationship between role accumulation and mental health. The second and third sections include literature on the first part of the model: section two is a review of the literature on the relationship between role accumulation and role strains; and section three, the relationship between role accumulation and role rewards. Section four includes literature on the second part of the model, the relationship between both role strains and rewards and mental health.

Much of the literature reviewed is focused on the issue of employment outcomes in urban wives. Within it there is general agreement that employment creates added strains for women (Skinner, 1980). The assumption that employment is problematic underlies the numerous studies which investigate the coping strategies of employed women. However, there is also support for the view that employment is

beneficial for women, as evidenced by the studies of work satisfactions for women. An important segment of the literature on women and work explores the differences in mental health of housewives and employed wives.

While rural women are less well studied, there have been several recent reports of work-related stress in farm wives. However, these studies do not systematically address the issue of comparative mental health in farm wives who have or do not have off-farm work.

Many of the studies reviewed used measures of psychological distress similar to or adapted from Langner's (1962) screening scale of symptoms. Measures of this type are compatible with theories of role strain which predict deficits in mental health. Other studies, especially those concerned with role rewards, used measures of positive well-being such as life satisfaction or happiness. It is the balance of these deficits and additions to mental health that is of interest in this study.

Work Role Accumulation and Mental Health

Work role accumulation can occur in two ways. Women may increase the number of work roles they have by adding a work role such as employment. Women may also increase the content of their work roles, accumulating work by increasing the amount of work in any work role.

Number of Roles and Mental Health

The hypothesis that the addition of an employment role to a household role leads directly to role conflicts and strain in women which can be measured in psychosomatic symptoms is intuitively appealing, but poorly supported by recent empirical evidence. Burke and Weir (1976) studied 189 couples, including 53 in which wives were employed full or part time, and reported that working women scored better on measures of mental and physical health and held more positive attitudes to life in general than did housewives. Northcott (1980, 1981) analysed scores of about 350 Edmonton-area women between the ages of 18 and 64 on Langer's (1962) 22-item screening scale for psychiatric symptoms. He reported no significant differences in symptomology between the groups, but a tendency for women who work full time to be healthier and happier than those who work part time or those who do not work.

In contrast, in a study comparing 135 employed and 130 unemployed urban women, Keith and Schafer (1985) found no differences in depression, as measured by reports of psychosomatic symptoms, between the two groups.

Lovell-Troy (1983) compared the mental health of employed wives and housewives using data from the 1974 NORC General Survey. He selected amonia, the social isolation and normlessness experienced by individuals, as his measure of mental health; arguing that it was a more inclusive and theoretically important measure of the role deficits that might impair well-being in women than was life satisfaction. He found

that any differences in anomia between housewives and employed wives disappeared when social class was controlled.

Related studies using life satisfaction as a measure of mental health found similar mixed results. Burke and Weir (1976), in their study of 189 urban Canadian couples, found that working wives reported greater life and marital satisfaction than did housewives. They assumed that employment caused the satisfactions. Ferree (1976a, 1976b) found that working wives in her sample of 135 working class women in the Boston area were happier and more satisfied with their lives than were housewives, and that the source of this satisfaction was higher levels of competence and self-esteem and greater opportunities for independence and self-determination; however, those working part-time were more satisfied than either housewives or full-time employees.

In contrast, in an analysis of six large national surveys of white, married women conducted in the United States between 1971 and 1976, Wright (1978) found no significant differences in life satisfaction between working wives and housewives. Similarly, Spreitzer, Snyder, and Larson (1979), using responses to one global life happiness question from the 1977 NORC annual general social survey, were unable to establish a causal relationship between life happiness and number of roles held of a possible set of five.

In their review of the effects of children and employment on wife's personal and marital adjustment, Gove and Peterson (1980) cited studies that reported better mental health in employed wives and studies that reported no significant differences in the health of the two groups of

women. They concluded that employed women might be slightly, but not significantly, more healthy, and that mental health was a function of role involvements that fit one's preferences.

Warr and Parry (1982) reviewed the literature on paid employment and women's psychological well-being and concluded that, using measures of psychological distress, life satisfaction or happiness, or positive well-being, there was no relationship between employment and well-being in married women with children at home. They found no studies in which employment was associated with poorer mental health in married women without children at home. However, for single women, employment was found to be important for promoting well-being. They also reported evidence that unemployed women who wanted to work but didn't were distressed, that negative evaluation of financial situation was associated with distress, that attitude to paid jobs was related to affect and life satisfaction, and that interaction strain predicted depression.

No systematic studies of mental health in farm wives with and without off farm employment were found; however, there were some indications that employment might have beneficial effects on farm wives. Berkowitz and Hedlund (1979) and Hedlund and Berkowitz (1979) analysed interviews conducted over a ten-year period with 20 New York State farm families for behavioural or interactional evidence of role-related distress. They found that wives with strong off-farm interests did not exhibit stress symptoms. While no indication was given that any of the wives had off-farm work, employment might have benefitted these women.

The wives in Ireland's (1983) study of the farm families in two Ontario counties reported that, while farm and family responsibilities contributed to psychosomatic stress in farm wives, off-farm work reduced their levels of frustration, and husbands provided important emotional comfort. This is consistent with the findings of Spreitzer et al. (1979) that satisfactions from one role compensate for deprivations in another, especially in a climate of high marital satisfaction. No attempt was made to relate these perceptions of stress to measures of symptoms.

There is little support in the studies reviewed for a direct relationship between role accumulation, measured as the addition of an employment role, and mental health, measured as psychological distress. This lack of consistent findings leads to hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 1. There will be no difference in mental health between farm wives with and without off-farm employment.

Content of Roles and Mental Health

Hours worked per week is frequently used as an indicator of the amount of prescribed activity (demands) associated with a work role. Keith and Schafer (1980, 1983), in their studies of urban, two-job families, reported that employed wives who worked longer hours reported more depression, as measured by reports of psychosomatic symptoms on a scale similar to that of Langner (1962). However, Aldous (1981) found that wife's employment was related to spouse's breadwinning ability. If

depression is related to relative financial deprivation in employed wives, as reported by Keith and Schafer (1983), and women work because their husbands' incomes are inadequate (Aldous, 1981) the relationship between hours of work and symptoms may be spurious.

Moreover, in another study Keith and Schafer (1985) using this same group of employed women, no differences were found in the mental health of wives with and without employment. Perhaps, as reported by Ferree (1976a, 1976b) and suggested by Goode (1960), there is an optimal amount of employment beyond which strains outweigh rewards. There may be a curvilinear relationship between amount of work and mental health in these women.

While no studies of mental health in farm wives with off-farm work were found, there was a study of psychosomatic symptoms in farm wives with different home and farm task loads (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1984, 1985). Task loads were determined by assessing the relative division of labour between husband and wife, as reported by the wife, on six selected household and six selected farm tasks. Sums of responses to the items give some indication of the amount of work being done; but since the items were not weighted for the time value of the task, task load was not equivalent to time spent. No relationship was found between task loads and symptoms.

In none of these studies was there any attempt to measure the amount of time spent in household or farm work or the total time spent in all work roles. In general, the addition of work roles reduces the time spent in any one work role in both urban and rural samples, but

this reduction is not large enough to prevent the total hours worked per week from rising (Berk, 1983; Council on Rural Development Canada, 1979). Nevertheless, there is insufficient evidence for predicting a relationship between amount of work in any role or total amount of work and mental health.

Hypothesis 2. There will be no relationship between amount of work in any role and mental health.

Hypothesis 3. There will be no relationship between total amount of work in all work roles and mental health.

Work Role Accumulation and Role Strain

The proposed model of the relationship between work role accumulation and mental health indicates that the effects of changes in work roles can only be understood through the intervening variables of structural role strain, interactional role strain and role rewards. This section reviews literature on the relationship between work role accumulation and structural and interactional role strains.

Structural role strain is "felt difficulty in meeting role obligations" (Goode, 1960, p. 483) because of overload and conflicting demands. Interactional role strain is difficulty in meeting role obligations because of discrepant expectations, either within the self or between the self and others. Structural and interactional role

strains are conceptually different and expected to have independent effects on mental health. However, in the studies reviewed, often only one of these constructs was used to measure strain, or structural and interactional concerns were mixed in a global measure of role strain. In such cases, the independent effects of structural and interactional strain cannot be assessed.

Work role accumulation is again conceptualized as having two facets: increases in number of roles and increases in the content of roles. A special concern associated with the content of roles is the effect of family members on scheduling of work.

Number of Roles and Role Strain

There is little research which attempts to assess changes in role strain with increasing roles. Most researchers are concerned with the amount of conflict or strain generated by any one role or particular combination of roles (Keith & Schafer, 1980; Pearlin et al., 1981; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978) or the conflicts which arise between two specific roles (Gilbert, Holahan, & Manning, 1981; Holahan & Gilbert, 1979a, 1979b; Olson, 1981).

Structural strain. One study of the relationship between number of roles and role strain is that of Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers (1983). These authors, using a measure of structural strain from overload and conflicting obligations in 238 urban American women, found that the addition of employment to a role set did not increase strain, but being a mother did. Using the scarcity approach, they reasoned that it was not the number of roles, but the characteristics of the roles, how the

roles were managed, and the resources available that determined the strain associated with a role set. Of particular importance for predicting strain was whether the role involvements of the women suited their preferences. This position is consistent not only with that of Marks (1977), but with the findings of Scanzoni and Fox (1980), who, in their decade review of sex role research, concluded that "high stress and low satisfaction seem to result primarily from the inability of persons to achieve their preferences" (1980, p. 752) in work role involvement.

In contrast, Herman and Gyllstrom found that "the number of social roles held was positively related to reported conflict between job and family responsibilities due to simultaneous demands on respondents' time. Married respondents with children reported the most conflict, while unmarried respondents reported the least" (cited in Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983, p. 331). Unfortunately, insufficient information was provided to evaluate the difference between these findings and those of Baruch et al. (1983).

Interactional role strain. Scanzoni and Fox (1980) argued that, while gender preferences in the division of labour are becoming less traditional, men hold more traditional ideas about work than do women. They believed that this difference in preferences increased the potential for frequent and serious conflicts, especially in the area of division of household tasks. However, no empirical studies were found which associated increases in the number of roles with interactional role strain.

The findings on the relationship between number of roles and role strain are limited and inconsistent; nevertheless, the proposed model of role strain predicts increases in strain from increases in number of work roles:

Hypothesis 4. As number of work roles increases, structural role strain will increase.

Hypothesis 5. As number of work roles increases, interactional role strain will increase.

Content of Roles and Role Strain

Much of the literature on role strain looks at the content of roles for sources of role strain. The content of roles can be assessed in two ways: by the number of role demands and by the scheduling flexibility permitted for meeting the demands. Role demands are usually measured by hours of work. Flexibility in meeting role demands is seldom measured, but is assumed to be a characteristic of specific roles. It is often assumed that there will be flexibility in scheduling housework, but that the demands of young children are preemptive (Berk, 1983). Presence of a role such as child care with inflexible demands should predict strain independent of hours spent at it.

Structural role strain. Voydanoff and Kelly (1984) and Kelly and Voydanoff (1985) studied the relationship between role strain and a number of demographic, family, and work variables in a sample of 468

urban working couples in the American southeast. They reported that role strain experienced as time shortages was related to being a female working parent of preschool or school age children, having longer employment hours, and having to work overtime or moonlight. Role strain experienced as tension and overload from employment was positively related to being a female employed parent (especially if a single parent) of a preschooler or an at-home adult child and having overtime work. They found an inverse relationship between work tension and satisfaction with the duties, hours, and scheduling of work; variables they believed to be measures of the autonomy and flexibility inherent in the job. They argued that children and jobs place high and conflicting demands on limited time and energy, and that factors such as overtime work which reduce flexibility in meeting these demands increase role strain.

Their findings about overtime and moonlighting are of particular interest for this study of work and farm wives. If farm work is seen as one out-of-the-household work role and employment a second, farm wives are in much the same situation as women who moonlight or work overtime; and they, too might be expected to suffer role strain. However, farm work takes place at the wife's residence and does not put income directly into a wife's hand, so may have different effects than a second paid job.

Katz and Piotrkowski (1983) studied 51 employed, inner-city black women to determine the effects of employment on family role strain. Role strain was measured by asking how easy or difficult it was to

arrange time to do each of ten family or household activities. They found that the demands of a job (time pressure, effort, and workload) and the autonomy of the job were related to family role strain, as was size of family, but that hours employed was related only to ease or difficulty of completing household chores.

The relationship between work load and structural role strain in rural women is less clear. None of the studies reviewed for information on this relationship measured the amount of work done by farm wives, and none provided information about the off-farm work of women.

Interactional role strain. There is evidence that increased role demands increase interactional strain for women. Gilbert, Holahan, and Manning (1981) studied female parents in dual-career families, and found that women who perceived their various roles to be equal in importance and believed they should meet all the demands placed on them (a role expansion strategy) reported slightly more role conflict, based on personal and interpersonal expectations for performance of the maternal and professional roles, than did those who priorized one role and were able to delay or ignore the demands associated with another (a role redefinition strategy).

Similarly, Olson (1981) studied role conflicts between housework and child care in 27 urban mothers of preschool children, and found that the interactional variables of expectations of self and support from others were associated with role strain. Women who felt they must maintain high housework standards placed more restrictions on their children, were less willing to interrupt household work to respond to

them, and spent less of their leisure time with them. In addition, women who had no help with household work were more likely to interact negatively with their children.

No reports of a relationship between increased demands within a role and interpersonal role strain were found. Indirect evidence of such a relationship or the expectation of such a relationship by women who take on extra work is found in Van Meter and Agronow's (1982) conclusion that married college students priorized their family roles in order to gain the support of spouses and reduce interactional strain.

Combined measures of role strain. A number of studies combined measures of structural and interactional strain. In their study of 135 urban two-job families in Iowa, Keith and Schafer (1980) measured role strain by asking four questions about work/family interference and adequacy of role performances. They found a relationship between strain and wife's age, number of children in the home, wife's employment hours, and spouse's employment hours. Wife's employment hours was the most important of these variables in explaining work-family strain. Increases in husband's employment hours may have reduced the flexibility that wives had in scheduling home obligations, increasing role conflict due to simultaneous, conflicting demands.

A contradictory finding on the effects of hours of work on role conflict using a measure of strain that included both structural and interactional concepts was reported by Holahan and Gilbert (1979b) in their study of 26 noncareer and 15 career women with bachelors degrees working at a large state university. Those who claimed career status

were generally in positions requiring more technical skill, and worked an average of 42.6 hours per week as opposed to the 40.19 hours per week worked by those in "jobs" (the significance of this difference was not reported). In this study, the women with "careers" reported greater career commitment and less role strain than did those with "jobs," even though the former worked longer hours. This finding supports Marks' (1977) hypothesis that commitment to valued roles creates added energy for meeting role demands.

The only empirical study found investigating the relationship between work load and strain in a rural population was that of Berkowitz and Perkins (1984) on work and stress in 126 wives on dairy farms in New York State. In this study, the relative division of household and farm labour was measured by home and farm task loads. The measurement of task loads was discussed in a previous section of this review. Role conflict was measured by asking how much tension was felt from neglecting roles, wanting to give more time to roles, and not meeting expectations of self and others; a mixture of structural and interactional concepts. Defining role conflict as "tension felt" made role conflict equivalent to role strain in the theoretical framework of the present thesis. Neither household nor farm task load was related to role conflict. However, because task loads were a measure of relative division of labour, and no time values were placed on task loads, these results should be interpreted with caution.

The studies reviewed above included questions about role strains that measured interactional constructs as well as structural constructs.

Questions about overload and conflicting obligations (Baruch et al., 1983), ease of managing activities (Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983), work/family interference (Keith & Schafer, 1980), and time pressures and shortages (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1984; Van Meter & Agronow, 1982; Voyandoff & Kelly, 1984) measure structural strain. Being concerned about adequacy of performance (Keith & Schafer, 1980; Van Meter & Agronow, 1982), reporting conflicts with spouse (Van Meter & Agronow, 1982), and feeling tension from not meeting expectations of self and others (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1984, 1985) are all measures of self-role and self-other congruence in expectations. Reports that being in preferred roles (Baruch et al., 1983), being more committed to careers (Holahan & Gilbert, 1979b), and perceiving the support of husbands (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1984; Van Meter & Agronow, 1982) predict reduced role strain also support interactionist theories of role strain. What is not clear from studies such as these that mix interactional and structural variables is what the independent effects of structure and interaction are on role strain.

The studies reviewed give some support to the structuralist contention that multiple roles are problematic because of conflict and strain related to overload and conflicting demands. Conditions which compromise flexibility in meeting demands, such as responsibility for the care of young children and lack of control over employment scheduling and performance, are particularly problematic for working wives. The effects of the interactionist concerns of identity and dissension on role strain are less clear, but there is evidence of both

strain and lack of strain from work added to roles. The model of role strain and the literature reviewed suggest the following hypotheses on amount of work and role strain:

Hypothesis 6. As the amount of work done in any work role increases, structural role strain will increase.

Hypothesis 7. As the amount of work done in any work role increases, interactional role strain will increase.

Issues in Scheduling of Work

Children. There is considerable support in the literature reviewed above for predicting that structural strain will rise in farm wives with presence and number of children (Baruch et al., 1983; Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983; Keith & Schafer, 1980). Presence of young children should also be related to structural role strain (Kelly & Voydanoff, 1985; Olson, 1981; Voyandoff & Kelly, 1984). In both cases, the amount of household work and the degree of scheduling difficulty should rise.

Other researchers report a relationship between family variables and role strain. Holahan and Gilbert (1979a) found that children complicate the life situation of dual career couples. While low career commitment and fewer working hours were associated with role strain in couples without children, higher hours worked and low spouse support were associated with role conflict in those with children. The

combination of high employment and children, a situation of increased demands in two roles, created strain for the women in these families.

Van Meter and Agrownow (1982) studied wives involved in unpaid work of another kind. In their study of 133 married female students in the Home Economics department of a large, urban university, they found that whether or not children needed child care was a more important predictor of role strain than was the presence of children; and dissatisfaction with child care was correlated with role strain regardless of the ages of the children. The authors described their sample as having a more traditional orientation to motherhood than the general population, and cautioned that this orientation might explain the importance of family variables in predicting role strain. Since farm families are also believed to be traditional in outlook (Bescher-Donnelly & Smith, 1981; Kohl, 1976; Sachs, 1983--but see also Schumm & Bollman, 1981) the presence of young children needing care might be expected to create similar strain for them.

Presence of teenage girls should relieve some of the strain on farm wives, as these girls would be expected to provide meaningful assistance with household duties. Olson (1981) reported that assistance with housework relieved some of the strain in interaction with young children. Kohl (1976) found that female children on farms and ranches in southwestern Saskatchewan were trained to help with household tasks. The assistance of teenage girls should ease both demands and scheduling problems in farm households.

The presence of teenage boys may have the opposite effect. Boys are likely to increase the amount of household work required, but supply little help with it (Berk, 1983). In addition, they may compete with the farm wife for a farm role (Hedlund & Berkowitz, 1979). Since interpersonal conflicts may arise when preferences for role involvements differ (Scanzoni & Fox, 1980), and role strain may result from inability to meet one's role preferences (Baruch et al., 1983), the presence of teenage boys may predict role strain in farm wives.

Because children influence both the amount and scheduling of work, and may influence role involvement as well, they should have an effect on role strain independent of hours of work.

Hypothesis 8. As number of children increases, structural role strain will increase.

Hypothesis 9. The presence of preschoolers will increase structural role strain.

Hypothesis 10. The presence of teenage girls will decrease structural role strain.

Hypothesis 11. The presence of teenage boys will increase the structural role strain.

Hypothesis 12. The presence of teenage boys will increase interactional role strain.

Husband support. The effect of husbands on role strain may be considerably more complex. Husband support has consistently been found to be related to role conflict, strain, and measures of mental health (Baruch et al., 1983; Berkowitz & Perkins, 1984, 1985; Burke & Weir, 1977; Elman & Gilbert, 1984; Gilbert, Holahan, & Manning, 1981; Holahan & Gilbert, 1979a; Leavy, 1983; Olson, 1981; Van Meter & Agronow, 1982). Husband support is a type of social support, which has been categorized as aid, affect, and affirmation (Leavy, 1983). Aid has clear implications for structural strain, but affect and affirmation are conceptually less clear. All three variables may measure the general marital environment rather than any role-specific effect. The measurement of husband support varies in the studies reviewed, and includes questions about actual help, satisfaction with help, and emotional aid. Actual help may reduce demands and increase flexibility for meeting demands, reducing structural strain. However, all of the variables may measure the quality of interaction between husband and wife. Measures of husband support may be confounded with measures of interactional role strain.

Husband support and interactional strain. Studies of rural populations document interpersonal conflicts associated with the wife's work roles. Wilkening and Bharadwaj (1967, 1968), in a study of 500 Wisconsin farm families, found that wives expected greater involvement

in farm decision-making than husbands thought they should have, and that wives earned the right to be involved in farm decisions by participating in farm work. However, the wife's control over her farm labour inputs may be, to some extent, illusory. In cases where other roles compete for her labour or where it can be defined as surplus to needs, especially when a son is being introduced into the enterprise, she may be excluded from both active participation and decision-making (Hedlund & Berkowitz, 1978).

Berkowitz and Hedlund (1979) and Hedlund and Berkowitz (1979) described case studies of 20 New York State dairy farm families in which disputes about the wife's farm role resulted in the exclusion of an interested or previously active wife from farming tasks. In this case, it was the loss of a role rather than role accumulation that was associated with interactional role conflict.

The issue is less clear with respect to off-farm employment, though Wilkening and Bharadwaj (1967) report that, of all the farm family decision areas studied, there was the least consensus between husband's expectations for and wife's decision-making about wife's off-farm employment. In urban populations, husbands' attitudes about wives' employment are situational: they change to fit wives' attitudes, wives' actual employment, and the feasibility and necessity for wives' work (Spitze & Waite, 1981). Farm husbands' attitudes may be similarly situational. If so, while there is potential for interactional conflict about both farm work and off-farm work for farm wives, the farm wife may have greater control over off-farm employment than farm work. If a farm

wife takes off-farm work, interactional role strain could surface because of interpersonal disputes about performance of household and farm tasks.

Where dissension exists between husband and wife over the wife's work roles, the wife is unlikely to report husband support. Husband support and interactional role strain may be inverse measures of the same construct.

Husband support and structural strain. There is little published research about the association between wife's role accumulation and husband's help in rural families. However, in urban populations, husband's household help is considered to be a reward for wife's employment. Employed wives report reduced time spent in housework and increased sharing of housework (Maret & Finlay, 1984); and wife's income is a significant predictor of husband's involvement in household labour (Bird, Bird, & Scruggs, 1984), although wives still do most of the housework (Condran & Bode, 1982; Nickols & Metzen, 1982). Since husband's assistance is a coping strategy which reduces wife's household demands, wife's employment may serve to ensure such assistance and forestall structural role strain.

A qualification of the relationship between wife's income and husband's assistance is necessary. Only in those cases where the wife's income approaches that of her husband, which is most likely to be the case in low-earning families, does the husband contribute much to housework (Model, 1982). This is an important qualification for studies of farm families, because it is difficult to separate income generated

by the wife's farm work from that generated by her husband's farm work. In addition, wife's off-farm income is likely to be insignificant in comparison to gross farm sales.

No studies of the relationship between wife's household and farm hours and husband's household hours were found. However, Maret and Finlay (1984), in an analysis of a national survey which included 1223 married women with children at home, reported that farm husbands in the United States were less likely than urban husbands to assist with household tasks; therefore, it is unlikely that farm husbands provide much actual assistance with housework. Nevertheless, the husbands in Keating and Doherty's (1985) study of Alberta grain farm families reported an average of 385 hours of household work a year. This may be enough to allow wives flexibility in meeting demands even if it does not substantially reduce their workloads; and in so doing, reduce structural role strain.

Some support for this position is found in the work of Berkowitz and Perkins (1984), who reported that husband's household task load was related to perception of husband support; which was, in turn, inversely related to wife's role conflict. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 13. As husband's household hours increase, wife's structural role strain will decrease.

Work Role Accumulation and Role Rewards

Number of Roles and Role Rewards

The number of roles held is associated with rewards from roles in a direct way: those without a role cannot gain rewards from it. In addition, a particular role may have a unique association with some specific reward: the reward of income is usually associated with employment. Because this direct relationship makes comparison of women with and without roles empirically meaningless, attention was focussed on the relationship between content of roles and role rewards.

Content of Roles and Role Rewards

Satisfaction from work. Sieber (1974) argues that one of the important outcomes of role accumulation is the enhancement of self-concept through enrichment of the personality and ego gratification. Women who report personal satisfaction from their roles are reporting information about personal gratification.

Rural women generally report high levels of satisfaction from all their work roles (Council on Rural Development Canada, 1979; Keating & Doherty, 1985). In the Rural Women's Study (Council on Rural Development Canada, 1979), satisfaction with housework was not directly related to housework hours. Only those spending over seventy hours per week at housework reported lower satisfaction from it. Nor was satisfaction with involvement in the farm enterprise related to farm hours. Information about conditions that might influence the

relationship between employment and satisfaction with employment was not given.

This study suggests that women find satisfaction in all of their work-roles regardless of the number of hours worked. Nevertheless, Marks (1977) argues that we spend more time at work we are committed to, and that commitment comes from enjoyment of role performances and anticipation of role rewards. Oakley argues that a similar process is at work with women's housework hours. She reports that women at home use "job enlargement" as a strategy to raise the "interest quotient" of housework (1974, p. 111). If women do more work so they will enjoy it more, and spend more time at work they find more enjoyable, we should find a relationship between amount of work and satisfaction.

Hypothesis 14. There will be a relationship between amount of work done in any role and satisfaction from that role.

Role Strains, Role Rewards, and Mental Health

Role Strain and Mental Health

There is mixed support in the literature for the proposition that role strain is related to mental health. Keith and Schafer (1980), in their study of role strain and depression in two-job families, reported that while role strain was related to depression in husbands, it was not in wives. They used a measure of role strain that mixed structural and

interactional concerns, so it was not possible to ascertain the individual effects of either role strain construct.

In contrast, the following research in a farm population is suggestive of a positive relationship between role strain and mental health. In their study of 20 New York State dairy farm families, Hedlund & Berkowitz (1979) reported that structural conflicts between farm involvements and mothering duties compromised the farm wife's ability to function effectively. Using data from the same study, Berkowitz and Hedlund (1979) reported that interactional conflicts from lack of role congruence resulted in exclusion of some of the wives from active farming and created marital and mental health problems for those farm wives which interferred with their ability to interact effectively with their families, meet family goals, or accomplish necessary tasks.

In their empirical study of task loads, role conflicts and psychosomatic symptoms of wives on dairy farms in New York State, Berkowitz and Perkins (1984) found that both role conflict and husband support were related to psychosomatic symptoms, with husband support buffering the relationship between conflict and symptoms. A further analysis of the data (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1985) showed that interpersonal role conflict was more important for predicting symptoms than was conflict from competing demands. Of particular relevance here is that the interpersonal conflicts measured in this re-analysis were those involving disagreements about the wife's farm role. It is possible that husband support and interpersonal conflict are confounded in this study. Nevertheless, it provides important support for the

hypothesis that both structural and interactional role strain reduce mental health in farm wives.

Taken together, these findings suggest that both structural and interactional role strain will have a negative effect on mental health, and lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 15. As structural and interactional role strains increase, mental health will decrease.

Work Satisfaction and Mental Health

Only two of the studies reviewed tested the relationship between satisfaction and psychological distress in women. In the study by Keith and Schafer (1983), job satisfaction, measured as how well the subject liked her current job, did not predict reduced depression in urban women. Only work orientation, evaluation of self as a provider, and comparative financial situation predicted depression in these women. In contrast, dissatisfaction with performing five work activities, four of which belonged to the household work role, was related to depression in the urban women in Keith and Schafer's 1985 study.

While there is little support in the literature for a relationship between work satisfaction and psychological distress, there is support for a relationship between work satisfaction and life satisfaction; and life satisfaction is an indicator of mental health. Burke and Weir (1976) believed that job satisfaction contributed to the mental and physical well-being of the employed women in their study, as did Ferree

(1976a, 1976b). Spreitzer et al. (1979) reported a linear relationship between happiness and number of roles performed with satisfaction, and a compensatory effect of satisfactions in one role on deprivations in others, especially in cases of high marital satisfaction in females. Further support for this relationship is found in Ireland's (1983) report that off-farm work reduced levels of frustration in farm wives.

While empirical support may be limited, Sieber's (1974) theory suggests a relationship between work satisfaction and mental health.

Hypothesis 16. As satisfaction from any work role increases, mental health will increase.

Net Effects of Role Strains and Role Rewards

In line with the findings reported, Stryker and Macke (1978), in their review of the role conflict literature, concluded that the existence of role conflict could not be seriously questioned, but agreed with Sieber (1974) that the net gains in a given configuration of roles might outweigh the strains of a conflicting pair. That is, as predicted by "expansion" theories of role accumulation (Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974) and Burr's theory of role strain (Burr et al., 1979), the rewards for working wives may outweigh the costs, and role conflict may not automatically be followed by deficits in mental health.

Sieber (1974) expected role rewards to buffer role strains. Since he did not proceed to a test of his hypothesis, it is not clear whether

he meant that the effect would be additive or interactive. This study will test the interactive hypothesis as well as the additive hypothesis.

Hypothesis 17. There will be an interaction between role strains and satisfactions in predicting mental health.

Group Differences in Predictors of Mental Health

The important issue may be not how women with and without jobs differ in mental health, but what contributes to mental health in each group. In their study, Keith and Schafer (1985) found that employed women reported more disagreement over roles, more dissatisfaction with involvement in family roles, and somewhat more favourable assessments of their work than did women without employment. Dissatisfaction with and disagreement about role involvement were related to depression in both groups, but relative financial deprivation was related to depression in only the employed wives.

In the study by Lovell-Troy (1983) the conditions leading to anomia in each group were different. Among housewives, but not among employed wives, size of community and number of pre-teen, school-age children predicted anomia.

In her study using life satisfaction as a measure of mental health, Freudiger (1983) found that the sources of life satisfaction were different for employed women and women who had never been employed. Women who were formerly employed were more like the presently employed than the never employed.

The pattern of strains and satisfactions of farm wives with and without off-farm employment may differ, and this may differentially affect their mental health.

Hypothesis 18. There will be a difference in the work-related variables that predict mental health in farm wives with and without off-farm employment.

Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. There will be no difference in mental health between farm wives with and without off-farm employment.

Hypothesis 2. There will be no relationship between amount of work in any role and mental health.

Hypothesis 3. There will be no relationship between total amount of work in all work roles and mental health.

Hypothesis 4. As number of work roles increases, structural role strain will increase.

Hypothesis 5. As number of work roles increases, interactional role strain will increase.

Hypothesis 6. As the amount of work done in any work role increases, structural role strain will increase.

Hypothesis 7. As the amount of work done in any work role increases, interactional role strain will increase.

Hypothesis 8. As number of children increases, structural role strain will increase.

Hypothesis 9. The presence of preschoolers will increase structural role strain.

Hypothesis 10. The presence of teenage girls will decrease structural role strain.

Hypothesis 11. The presence of teenage boys will increase the structural role strain.

Hypothesis 12. The presence of teenage boys will increase interactional role strain.

Hypothesis 13. As husband's household hours increase, wife's structural role strain will decrease.

Hypothesis 14. There will be a relationship between amount of work done in any role and satisfaction from that role.

Hypothesis 15. As structural and interactional role strains increase, mental health will decrease.

Hypothesis 16. As satisfaction from any work role increases, mental health will increase.

Hypothesis 17. There will be an interaction between role strains and satisfactions in predicting mental health.

Hypothesis 18. There will be a difference in the work-related variables that predict mental health in farm wives with and without off-farm employment.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHOD

Design

This research is part of a larger study of Alberta grain farm families conducted by Drs. Norah Keating and Maryanne Doherty during 1984 and 1985. The study, An Analysis of the Farm Production Unit with Recommendations for Improving Net Farm Income, was funded by the Agricultural Research Council of Alberta, Farming for the Future (Project No. 83-0104). The purpose of the larger study was to describe the work patterns and relative contributions of the members of the farm production unit to the farm operation, the evaluations that farmers and their spouses made of their work roles, and the health of these farm men and women.

Sample for the Larger Study

The population for the larger study was all Alberta farm households owning and operating grain farms. For the purposes of the study, a farm was defined as a land holding of at least 20 acres which produced at least $2,500 in agricultural products. A grain farm was a farm on which at least 51% of gross farm income came from production of grain crops. There were approximately 24,000 farm households in Alberta identified in

the 1981 census as belonging to this category of farms. Two random samples of 1,500 households each, stratified by the eight crop districts in Alberta, were drawn from this population by Statistics Canada. Study questionnaires were sent to those in the first sample in November, 1984, and to the second sample in February, 1985.

Materials and Procedure

A self-response questionnaire was designed for distribution by mail to the selected farm households. It consisted of three parts. The first was a yellow form with three pages and 10 questions, some of them multi-part, for collecting data about the size, productivity and economic viability of the farm and the number of people involved in farm and household operation on it. The second was a blue form with 10 pages and 66 questions, some of them multi-part, requesting information about hours of work in different work roles, satisfaction and salience of roles, role strain, personal relationships, physical and psychosomatic health, sense of mastery, and demographic and family variables of the male operator or husband in the family. The third was a pink form requesting identical information from the female operator or wife in the family. In addition, a letter of introduction explaining the purpose of the study, a set of instructions, a return card for those wanting a summary of the results of the survey, and a metered return envelope for the completed questionnaire were included. In order to ensure the anonymity of the respondents, the prepared envelopes containing all of these materials were distributed by the Edmonton regional office of Statistics Canada. A reminder card was sent by them to all recipients

three weeks after the initial mail-out. Responses were received from 414 farm units, a 13.8% return rate.

Research Design

The purpose of the larger study was to provide basic information on Alberta grain farm families. The information sought was descriptive and correlational in nature. A representative sample was required from a population that is geographically widely dispersed. For these reasons, a self-response survey questionnaire was designed to gather the required data.

The questionnaire was developed specifically for this study. The measures included, while based on measures that had been used in previous research, had never been used in their present form. During the design of the instrument, care was taken to assess the questions against those asked by other researchers in similar studies, especially those of Berkowitz and Perkins (1984), who studied work and health of wives on New York State dairy farms. In a further attempt to establish validity, drafts of the questionnaire were field tested three times during the design period in group settings with researchers in attendance so that questions about the questionnaire items could be addressed and problems of meaning identified. In addition, copies of the instrument were examined by experts in the field of survey research, family studies, and rural sociology to assess the face validity of the questions and the format of the questionnaire. While none of these procedures guarantees validity, careful checking at each stage should

increase the probability that the questions measure what they are intended to measure.

Since the measures used were prepared specifically for the study, measures of reliability were not available for them. The authors did not report any tests of reliability made on their pretest or survey data.

Response rates were a problem with most mail surveys, as they were with this one. However, response rates to surveys of the agricultural community in Alberta are consistently low, and in a similar range. Nevertheless, low response rates compromise external validity, and generalizations based on the data must be qualified.

Sample for This Study

A subsample of the original study sample was selected for this study. The criteria for inclusion were that the women were married or living in common law arrangements, lived on their farms, reported at least some hours of both household and farm work, and responded to a question about employment. There were 184 women who met these criteria. Of these, 94 reported that they had not been employed off the farm in the past year, and 90 reported that they had. Only 87 of the women with off-farm jobs reported employment hours.

Measurement

The Dependent Variable

Mental Health. Mental health was measured with the eight-item scale of psychosomatic symptoms used by Berkowitz and Perkins (1984) in their study of farm wives. The items were scored on a five-point Likert-type scale, with one indicating frequent experience of the symptom and five indicating no experience of the symptom. Respondents were asked how often they had had each of the following experiences during the past year:

1. Have you any trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep?
2. Have you been bothered by shortness of breath when you were not exercising or working hard?
3. Have you had fainting spells?
4. Have you been bothered by nervousness (irritable, fidgety, tense)?
5. Have you been so restless that you cannot sit still for long?
6. Have you sometimes felt that people are against you for no good reason?
7. Have you had worries that get you down physically?
8. Have you been worried by loneliness?

The Independent Variables

A. Work Role Accumulation

1. Presence of off-farm work. "In 1984 did you do any paid off-farm work?" (yes/no)
2. Amount of household work. Reports of monthly hours in specific task areas were summed for yearly household hours.
3. Amount of farm work. Reports of monthly hours in specific task areas were summed for yearly farm hours.
4. Amount of off-farm work. Reports of monthly hours were summed for yearly off-farm employment hours.
5. Total amount of work. Yearly totals of hours in all work roles were summed.

B. Family Variables

Respondents were asked to report the age and sex of each of their children and to specify residence (at home/not at home). Computer sorts were done for:

1. Number of children under age 19 and living at home
2. Presence of preschoolers under age 6 and living at home
3. Presence of teenage girls age 13 to 18 and living at home
4. Presence of teenage boys age 13 to 18 and living at home
5. Husband's household hours. Husbands reported monthly hours in specific household tasks. Yearly totals were calculated.

The Intervening Variables

A. Role Strain

Responses to the question "How often are you troubled about the following?" were recorded on a five-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating always troubled and 5 indicating never troubled. Items were recoded so that a higher score indicated more strain.

Structural role strain:

1. neglecting household duties
2. neglecting farm duties
3. neglecting off-farm duties
4. wanting to give more time to household duties
5. wanting to give more time to farm duties
6. wanting to give more time to off-farm duties

Interactional role strain:

7. not fulfilling expectations of yourself
8. not fulfilling expectations of others

B. Role Rewards

Satisfaction from work roles

Responses to the following questions were recorded on a five-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating very little satisfaction and 5 a great deal of satisfaction:

1. Satisfaction from household work. How much personal satisfaction do you receive from your household work?

2. Satisfaction from farm work. How much personal satisfaction do you receive from your farm work?
3. Satisfaction from off-farm work. How much personal satisfaction do you receive from your off-farm paid work?

Data Analysis

Preliminary Analysis

Frequency distributions were calculated for each of the 23 variables in the study. Zero order correlations between all possible pairs of the variables were calculated using the Pearson correlation procedure in the SPSSX package. The role strain and mental health variables were factor analysed to assess the propriety of using the items as two conceptually discrete scales.

Amount of work done. The frequency distributions revealed substantial overreporting of hours of household work, with approximately 8% of the subjects reporting more than 24 hours of household work per day. No subjects reported farm work hours or employment hours in excess of 24 hours per day. When total hours of work were calculated, 13% of the subjects had more than 24 hours of work in all work roles per day.

This overreporting of hours was the result of a data collection procedure designed to find the amount of time spent at specific household and farm tasks within these work roles. However, since subjects may attend to several tasks at the same time, as do mothers who combine meal preparation and child care, the same hours may have been

reported in several categories when task performances overlapped. It is less likely that overreporting was a problem in employment hours, as these would have been accounted for to the employer; however, employees who attended to personal matters at work and teachers who combined class preparation and household tasks could report inflated total hours. It seems reasonable to assume that the overreporting was constant across all subjects. As a result, the hours of work reported in this study were considered meaningful only as assessments of amount of work done, not as true ratio measures of time spent in work.

It was decided that the hours of work reported might best be interpreted as ordinal data which reflected the subjects' perceptions of relative amount of work done. Categories for household and farm work were established using the criterion of equal distribution, with one-third of the respondents in each of three categories. Categories for off-farm work were established using the criterion of substantively meaningful divisions, with categories representing no, half-time or less, and more than half-time employment. The categories were as follows:

little household work	-	1 to 2,400 hours
average household work	-	2,401 to 4,199 hours
much household work	-	4,200 to 13,671 hours
little farm work	-	1 to 220 hours
average farm work	-	221 to 627 hours
much farm work	-	628 to 3,745 hours
no off-farm work	-	0 hours
some off-farm work	-	1 to 999 hours
much off-farm work	-	1,000 to 2,460 hours

Household hours and total work hours were almost perfectly correlated (r=.96, p=.000). Because of this, the variable of total work hours was removed from the study.

Role strain and mental health. Six of the role strain variables (being troubled by wanting to give more time to household duties, wanting to give more time to farm duties, neglecting household duties, neglecting farm duties, not fulfilling expectations of yourself, and not fulfilling expectations of others) and all of the mental health variables were significantly intercorrelated. The role strain variables of "wanting to give more time to off-farm duties" and "neglecting off-farm duties" were less predictive of the other variables. Because of this, and because these two variables did not apply to the subjects without off-farm employment, they were eliminated from the study.

The remaining role strain variables, save one, and the mental health variables were included in a factor analysis to see if the factor solution differentiated between the two constructs. The variable "not fulfilling expectations of others" was excluded because it was highly correlated with the variable "not fulfilling expectations of yourself" (r=.65, p=.000), and would have disrupted the factor patterns. A two-factor solution which differentiated between the role strain and mental health variables was accepted. A mean score based on the five role strain variables in the factor analysis was used in subsequent analyses. Scores on the eight mental health variables were summed to form a mental health score for use in the analyses.

Test of the Model

The test of the model proceeded in three stages. First, the dependent variable of mental health and the intervening variables of role strain and role satisfactions were regressed on the independent variables of amount of time in each role. Second, mental health was regressed on role strain, role satisfactions, and the interactions between strain and satisfactions. Third, employment status was introduced into the regression of mental health on strains and rewards.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. There will be no difference in mental health between farm wives with and without off-farm employment.

The correlation between employment status and mental health was not statistically significant.

Hypothesis 2. There will be no relationship between amount of work in any role and mental health.

Linear relationship: Linear relationships between hours of work in each of the work roles and mental health were assessed using Pearson correlations. There were no statistically significant correlations between the number of hours of work in any of the three work roles and mental health.

Curvilinear relationship: In order to determine if there was a curvilinear relationship between hours of work in any work role and mental health, as suggested by Ferree (1976a, 1976b), mental health was

regressed on the squares of hours of work in each of the three work roles. No quadratic trend was found: none of the squares of hours of work in a work role predicted mental health.

Categorical relationship: Because of the overreporting of hours of household work, the reported hours of work in each work role were treated as ordinal data, divided into categories representing amount of work in each work role, and entered as dummy variables in a repression of mental health on amount of work in each work role. There were no statistically significant predictors of mental health in this regression of mental health on dummy variables representing the categories of work in each of the three work roles.

Hypothesis 3. There will be no relationship between total amount of work in all work roles and mental health.

This hypothesis was not tested: the variable "total amount of work" was eliminated from the study because of multicollinearity with the variable "amount of household work."

Hypothesis 4. As number of work roles increases, structural role strain will increase.

Hypothesis 5. As number of work roles increases, interactional role strain will increase.

Hypothesis 6. As the amount of work done in any work role increases, structural role strain will increase.

Hypothesis 7. As the amount of work done in any work role increases, interactional role strain will increase.

Five of the structural and interactional strain variables were combined and a mean role strain score was calculated. The role strain mean was regressed on the dummy variables representing the categories of little, average and much household and farm work and no, some, and much off-farm work and on the interactions of statistically significant predictor categories. Decreases in role strain were predicted by the categories of no off-farm work and much household work, but the effect of much household work was not statistically significant by itself. Increases in role strain were predicted by the category of much farm work and the interaction of much household work and no off-farm work (see Table I).

Hypothesis 8. As number of children increases, structural role strain will increase.

There was a statistically significant correlation between number of children and being troubled by wanting to give more time to household duties ($r=.17$, $p=.006$ 1-tailed).

Table I

Regression of Role Strain on Amount of Work in Work Roles

Multiple R	.318
R Square	.101
Signif F	.001

Variable	B	Beta	Sig T
Much household work x no off-farm work	.80	.35	.002**
Much farm work	.29	.15	.018*
No off-farm work	-.49	-.27	.001*
Much household work	-.16	-.09	.215*
(Constant)	2.71		

* 1-tailed test of significance

** 2-tailed test of significance

Hypothesis 9. The presence of preschoolers will increase structural role strain.

There were statistically significant correlations between presence of preschoolers and being troubled by neglecting household duties (r=.13, p=.02 1-tailed), wanting to give more time to household duties (r=.14, p=.02 1-tailed), and wanting to give more time to farm duties (r=.18, p=.005 1-tailed).

Hypothesis 10. The presence of teenage girls will decrease structural role strain.

There were no statistically significant correlations between presence of teenage girls and any of the structural role variables.

Hypothesis 11. The presence of teenage boys will increase the structural role strain.

Hypothesis 12. The presence of teenage boys will increase interactional role strain.

There were no statistically significant correlations between presence of teenage boys and any of the structural or interactional role strain variables.

Hypothesis 13. As husband's household hours increase, wife's structural role strain will decrease.

There was a statistically significant inverse correlation between husband's household hours and being troubled by neglecting household duties (r=-.11, p=.04 1-tailed).

Hypothesis 14. There will be a relationship between amount of work done in any role and satisfaction from that role.

Satisfaction from household work and satisfaction from farm work were each regressed on the dummy variables representing little, average, and much household and farm work and no, some, and much off-farm work. The category of little household work predicted reduced satisfaction from household work (B=-.25, Multiple R=.120, R Square=.014, Significant F=.05 1-tailed). The category of little farm work predicted reduced satisfaction from farm work (B=-.70, Multiple R=.340, R Square=.116, Significant F=.000).

Hypothesis 15. As structural and interactional role strains increase, mental health will decrease.

Hypothesis 16. As satisfaction from any work role increases, mental health will increase.

Hypothesis 17. There will be an interaction between role strains and satisfactions in predicting mental health.

Mental health was regressed on role strain, satisfaction from household work, satisfaction from farm work, and their interactions. Role strain (which was inversely related to mental health) and satisfaction from farming (which was directly related to mental health) were statistically significant predictors of mental health. Satisfaction from household work approached statistical significance as a predictor of mental health (Table II). The interaction, "role strain x satisfaction from farm work," exceeded the tolerances of the regression and was excluded from the test.

Hypothesis 18. There will be a difference in the work-related variables that predict mental health in farm wives with and without off-farm employment.

There was no difference in the work-related variables that predicted mental health in farm wives with and without off-farm employment. Employment status in interaction with role strain, satisfaction from household work, and satisfaction from farm work was not a statistically significant predictor of mental health in the regression.

Table II

Regression of Mental Health on Role Strain and Satisfactions

Multiple R	.426
R Square	.182
Signif F	.000

Variable	B	Beta	Sig T
Role strain	-1.91	-.33	.002*
Satisfaction from farm work	1.16	.21	.011*
Satisfaction from household work	.97	.18	.060*
(Constant)	29.04		

* 1-tailed test of significance

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

This study of work and mental health in farm wives examined the hypothesis that work influences mental health through the intervening variables of role strains and role rewards. For the purposes of this study, reported hours in household and farm work were categorized as little, average, and much work. Off-farm work hours were categorized as no, some, and much off-farm work. Role strain was defined as being bothered by neglecting or wanting to give more time to household and farm duties, and not fulfilling expectations of oneself. Mental health was defined as the frequency of experience of psychosomatic symptoms.

In this sample of married women living on grain farms in Alberta, 18.2% of the variance in mental health was explained by the attitudinal variables of role strain, which reduced mental health, and personal satisfaction from farm work, which increased mental health. The effect of these variables was additive rather than interactive.

The categories of much household work, much farm work, and no off-farm work, and the interaction between much household work and no off-farm work explained 10.1% of the variance in role strain in these women, but none of the variance in mental health. Much farm work was

associated with a constant increase in role strain. By themselves, much household work and no off-farm work were associated with decreases in role strain, but the effect of much household work was not statistically significant. However, in interaction, as the condition of much household work and no off-farm work, these two variables were associated with an increase in role strain.

The family variables of number, age, and sex of children and husband's household hours added little to the explanation of role strain in these women. Number of children was associated only with wanting to give more time to household duties. The presence of preschoolers was associated only with being troubled by neglecting household duties and wanting to give more time to household and farm duties. Husband's household hours was inversely related only to being troubled by neglecting household duties. Neither presence of teenage girls nor presence of teenage boys was related to any of the role strain variables.

The condition of little household work predicted reduced satisfaction from household work, but accounted for only 1.4% of the variance in it. The condition of little farm work predicted reduced satisfaction from farm work, and accounted for 11.6% of the variance in it.

The final model of the relationship between work and mental health in these farm wives is diagrammed in Figure 2. The relationships shown are not directional: causation cannot be assumed from these analyses. While the theories of Goode (1960), Seiber (1974), and Thoits (1983)

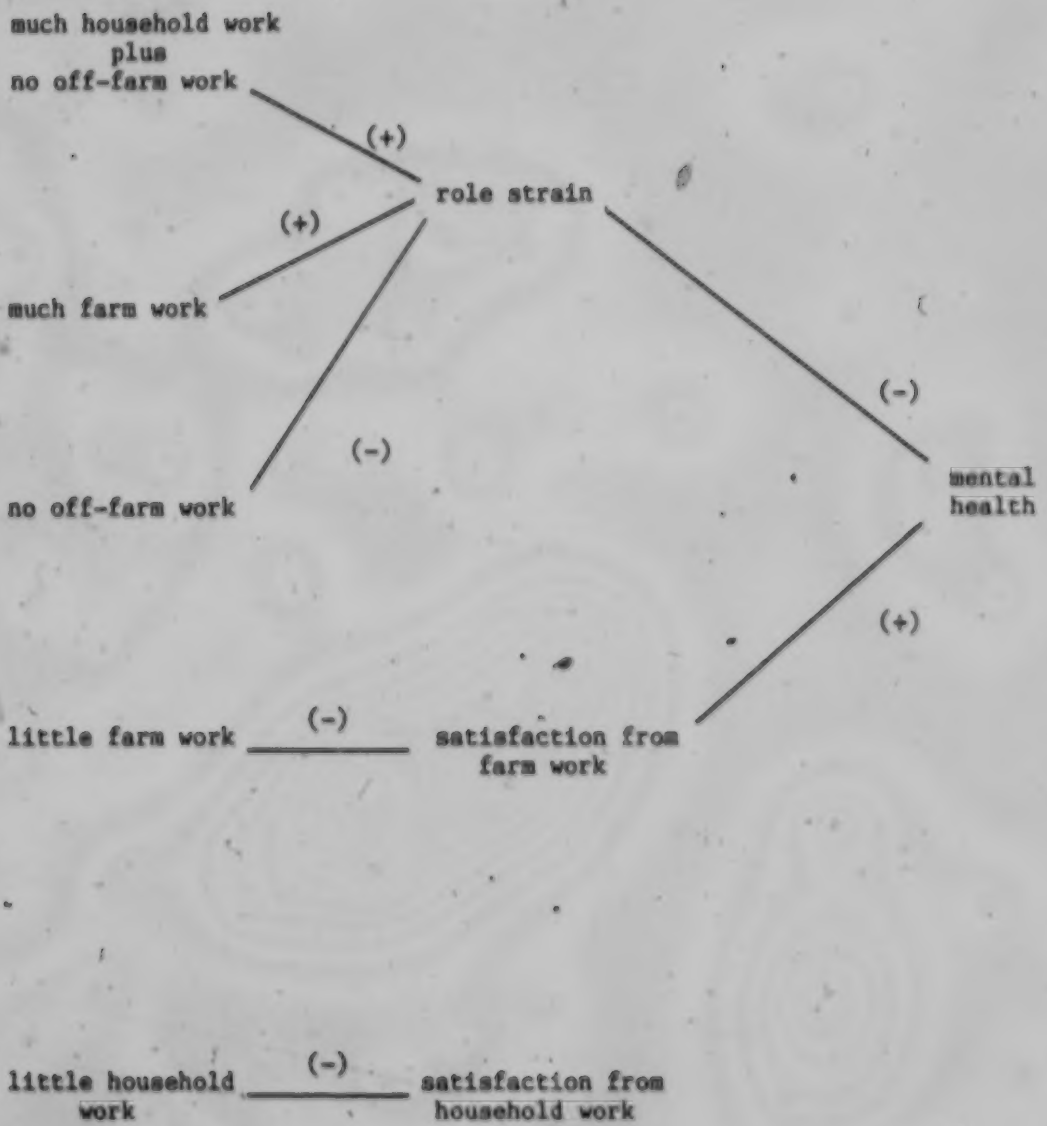

Figure 2. Findings on the relationship between work role accumulation and mental health.

suggest that the involvements cause the strain, rewards, and eventual mental health, and the data are consistent with this interpretation, it may not be correct. The data are also consistent with Marks' (1977) theory that commitment to roles, and thus time spent at them, comes from how individuals feel about their roles. Role strain and satisfaction from roles could cause more time to be spent at work. Furthermore, poor mental health may cause individuals to feel they are incapable of performing their duties or make them unable to do so.

Answers to the Research Questions

Based on the findings of this study, it would appear that farm wives on Alberta grain farms who have off-farm employment do not differ in mental health from those who do not. Mental health in both groups is predicted by the same work-related variables: reduced role strain and increased personal satisfaction from farm work. However, since the external validity of this study was compromised by a low response rate, caution is advised in generalizing these results.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are consistent with the proposed model. The relationship between work role accumulation and mental health in these farm wives is best understood through consideration of the intervening variables of role strain and role rewards. Rewards from work appear to balance strains from work. However, different work roles appear to have different effects on role strain and mental health.

The structural variables of amount of work done in each work role did explain part of role strain in these women. This finding differs

from that of Berkowitz and Perkins (1984), who found no relationship between home and farm task loads and role strain in dairy farm wives. However, it was not just increases in work in each role that was important for explaining role strain, but specific conditions of work involvement. The women who experienced the most role strain were those who did much farm work, much household work, and no off-farm work. This finding would be explained in different ways by each of the role theorists reviewed.

Goode (1960) would explain role strain in these women in terms of excessive demands in their household and farm work roles, resulting in part from lack of an off-farm work role which would allow them to make more equitable and preferential "role bargains." However, the condition of less work in each of the three work roles did not predict reduced role strain, so this explanation must be discounted. So, too, must Sieber's (1974) and Burr et al.'s (1979) expectation that added roles necessarily bring added role strains. Instead, there is support for Marks' (1977) belief that unbalanced commitments are problematic. In addition, consideration must be given to Thoits' (1983) social isolation hypothesis. Women with heavy commitments to home and farm and no off-farm work may be socially isolated because they lack the additional social identity that off-farm work would bring. However, while these women reported being troubled by role strain, they did not differ from those with other role sets in the outcome measure of psychosomatic symptoms used in this study. Identity deficits from lack of an off-farm work role did not interfere with their ability to function, perhaps

because a valued farm work role protected them from feelings of social inadequacy. These women are not just housewives: they are farm wives in a community that values farming.

The family variables which were expected to influence role strain through decreases in work load and increases in scheduling flexibility had little effect. Perhaps the amount of work done by family members was insufficient to have the expected effect. More likely, there were no important effects because role strain was conditional on particular role involvements rather than responsive to general increases in work. The expected relationship between presence of teenage boys and interactional role strain was not found. In this sample, women with teenage boys did more, not less farm work, so competition for a farm work role was not a problem in the aggregate.

Doing little housework was associated with little satisfaction from housework, and doing little farm work was associated with little satisfaction from farm work. It is likely that those who do not enjoy these work roles do not spend much time at them, as Marks (1977) suggests. If this is so, women may exercise a great deal of discretion in performance of household and farm tasks. Role demands in these areas may not be as invariant as Goode (1960) believes.

The perceptual variables of role strain and role rewards had the expected relationship to mental health; but again, rewards associated with a specific role were crucial. Personal satisfaction from farm work was related to mental health: personal satisfaction from household work was not. Satisfaction from farm work may be critical to the mental

health of these women because the farm is the central organizing focus of their lives. If they do not enjoy farm work, their identity as farmers is threatened. Satisfaction from housework may have less importance because women simply expect to do it regardless of what else they do, and so pay less attention to it. Alternately, these women may be responding to the relative values placed on household and farm roles by the community. Thoits (1983) argues that the subjective importance of a role is responsive to such relative cultural or subcultural valuation, and loss or gain of a valued role should have greater effects on mental health than changes in one less valued.

Research Issues

Measurement issues. The measurement of the constructs of amount of work in a work role, role strain, and mental health was required for this research. Measurement was an issue for each of these constructs.

The measure of work done in any role that was available for this study was a sum of time spent in specific tasks within each role. This measure provided a good assessment of the total amount of work done in a work role. It did not provide a true ratio measure of time spent in each role. True ratio measures may give better information about how time is divided among roles, but cannot give as much information about how much is done during a set time period. This study was concerned with the demands placed on women by their work roles, so the measure used was appropriate.

The theoretical framework for this study presumed that structural and interactional role strain were discrete and individually meaningful

constructs. However, the correlations among the role strain variables were high and factor analysis indicated a single factor solution for a role strain scale. It would appear that structure and interaction cannot be separated easily. Alternately, it may be that more precise measures would distinguish between the two constructs.

The measure of role strain used included four variables that assessed the subjects' feelings of competence in their household and farm roles and one variable that assessed their feelings of personal adequacy. In order to create a scale that would apply to all the subjects regardless of role involvements, variables that assessed feelings of competence in off-farm work were deleted. While the resulting scale provided no information about role strain from off-farm work, this loss of information was not judged to be serious, as the excluded variables were not significantly correlated with mental health. A more important problem may be that the scale items were not well balanced between structural and interactional items. Nevertheless, symbolic interaction theory suggests that feelings of competence in roles will lead to feelings of personal adequacy, so the balance between the items may be inconsequential.

Mental health was measured as frequency of experience of psychosomatic symptoms; that is, as deficits to mental health. While this type of measure is commonly used in studies of this type, it is a limited view of the mental health of the subjects. It provides no information about conditions that might improve adequate or good mental

health. More broadly based measures might provide somewhat different answers.

Future research. Sieber (1974) proposed four different types of role rewards. This study was an investigation of only one, that of satisfaction from work roles. In it, satisfactions from different work roles were found to have different abilities to predict mental health. Other work rewards might be found to have similarly different relationships to mental health. Future studies should be designed to seek information about which rewards are most efficacious. Research should also be done to investigate non-work role rewards, such as rewards from leisure, that might off-set strains from work roles.

Thoits (1983) recommends investigation of the status attached to roles and the conditional effects of role status on role loss or gain and mental health. It would be helpful to know what values farm wives place on their roles, and how the values influence the relationship between role accumulation and mental health.

It should also prove instructive to focus on groups that display particularly high strain and low mental health to see if other factors influence the relationship between role accumulation and mental health. It may be that some combination of personal, interactional, or farm variables is related to both amount and kind of work done and mental health. Specific variables of interest would be farm size and productivity, current economic conditions, evaluation of relative financial status in the community, and husband/wife concensus on wife's farm role involvement.

Longitudinal studies which follow farm wives as they add and drop work roles would provide information about short and long term effects of changes in roles. These studies could help us understand age and cohort differences in the relationship between work role accumulation and mental health.

Implications for Family Life Practitioners

The most important finding in this study is the importance of perception in explaining mental health. It was not the structural variables of amount of time spent in work and amount of help received from family members that accounted for mental health. Instead, it was the perception these women had of role strains and satisfactions and the balance of these attributions that predicted mental health. Nevertheless, the strains and satisfactions experienced by these women were grounded in specific conditions of their work involvements.

LaRossa (1983), in a report of the strains associated with transition to parenthood, drew attention to what he called the "social reality of time." He argued that social time was more important than physical time for understanding the strains the family experienced. In like manner, the social-time approach to role accumulation taken by Sieber (1974), Marks (1977), and Thoits (1983) proved more useful than the physical-time approach to role strain taken by Goode (1960) for explaining mental health in these farm women.

Professionals who work with farm wives would be well advised to attend to the social realities of farm women's time when designing and delivering mental health programs in rural communities. They should ask

farm wives about the strains and rewards associated with their work roles as well as the physical organization of the roles if their purpose is to assist these women in dealing with work-related mental health problems.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

The owner of the farm should answer this section.

A STUDY OF ALBERTA FARMERS

We would like to know some general information about your farm. Please answer the following questions.

1. How many acres are there in your farm? Please fill out the chart below.

Acres	Acres Hay and Pasture	Acres Cropped	Acres Summerfallow	Acres Other	Total Acres
Owned	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Rented by you	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Rented out to other(s)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

2. Which of the following best describes your farm? Please check (✓) only one.
   - _____ 1 one grain or oilseed crop
   - _____ 2 more than one grain or oilseed crop
   - _____ 3 one grain or oilseed and livestock
   - _____ 4 more than one grain or oilseed and livestock
   - _____ 5 other (Please specify) _____

3. How would you describe the legal ownership arrangement of your farm? Please check (✓) the most accurate one.
   - ____ 1 individual ownership (male)
   - ____ 2 individual ownership (female)
   - ____ 3 joint ownership by husband and wife
   - ____ 4 individual and joint ownership
   - ____ 5 partnership with written agreement
   - ____ 6 partnership with unwritten agreement
   - ____ 7 family corporation
   - ____ 8 other

4. Do you live on your farm?
   ____ 1 yes ____ 2 no

5. What was your total gross value of agriculture products sold from January 1 to December 31, 1984?

   $_____

6. What was your net farm income from January 1 to December 31, 1984?

   $_____

7. What was your total farm debt on December 31, 1984?

   $_____

8. How stressed do you feel by your farm debt? Please circle your response.

No Stress				A Great Deal of Stress	No Farm Debt
1	2	3	4	5	0

9. If you could not obtain operating financing to cope with your debt, which of the following would you do? Please circle your response for each item.

	Yes	No	Not Applicable 0
Consolidate loans	1	2	0
Remortgage	1	2	0
Sell livestock	1	2	0
Sell machinery	1	2	0
Sell land	1	2	0
Lease or rent your land	1	2	0
Take an off-farm job (you or spouse)	1	2	0
Other (please specify) _____	1	2	0

10. We would like to know who works on your farm and in your household.

I. A. Start with yourself.
B. Circle the appropriate sex.
C. Give your age in years.
D. Of <u>all</u> the work done on your farm, write the percentage that <u>you</u> do.
E. Circle whether you are paid.
F. Of all the work done in the household, write the percentage that you do.
G. Circle whether you are paid.

II. List the <u>members of your family</u> who work on your farm or in your household in column A, give their relationship to you and fill in columns B through G for each person.

III. List <u>all other people</u> who work on your farm or in your household in column A and fill in columns B through G for each person.

A. Relationship to Yourself	B. Sex Male-Female	C. Age	D. % of Total FARM Work Done	E. Wages Paid for FARM Work Yes - No	F. % of Total HOUSEHOLD Work Done	G. Wages Paid for HOUSEHOLD Work Yes - No
SELF	M - F	___ yrs	___ %	Y - N	___ %	Y - N
	M - F	___ yrs	___ %	Y - N	___ %	Y - N
	M - F	___ yrs	___ %	Y - N	___ %	Y - N
	M - F	___ yrs	___ %	Y - N	___ %	Y - N
	M - F	___ yrs	___ %	Y - N	___ %	Y - N
	M - F	___ yrs	___ %	Y - N	___ %	Y - N
	M - F	___ yrs	___ %	Y - N	___ %	Y - N
	M - F	___ yrs	___ %	Y - N	___ %	Y - N
	M - F	___ yrs	___ %	Y - N	___ %	Y - N
	M - F	___ yrs	___ %	Y - N	___ %	Y - N
	M - F	___ yrs	___ %	Y - N	___ %	Y - N
(use reverse if necessary)			Total 100 %		Total 100 %	

The female (wife) of the farm operation should answer this section.

A STUDY OF ALBERTA FARMERS

Although it may be difficult for you to determine the number of hours that you spend on certain activities, your response to these questions would be most helpful in describing a true picture of what a farmer does. Therefore, please complete as much of this questionnaire as you can.

1. Please estimate the total number of hours per month you spent on the following farm and household activities in 1984.

FARM WORK	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
a) Field Work (including driving field machinery, driving truck, bringing meals to field)	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs
b) Secretarial/Bookkeeper (including correspondence, keeping records and filing, bookkeeping, preparing income tax, banking)	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs
c) Management (including supervising farm help, discussing and making decisions, purchasing items, marketing products)	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs
d) Building and Property Maintenance (including building maintenance, fencing, related work, weed spraying)	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs
e) Equipment Maintenance (including repairing, cleaning, fueling)	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
FARM WORK												
f) Chores (including feeding and watering livestock, performing milking chores, cleaning barns, helping with farm animals)	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs
g) Other Farm Related Work (including running errands, travelling time)	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs
HOUSEHOLD WORK												
a) Taking Care of People (including caring for children, transporting children, caring for other family member(s)	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs
b) Management (including supervising hired help, purchasing items, discussing and making decisions, entertaining visitors)	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs
c) Home Maintenance (including repairing, cleaning, doing laundry, cooking)	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs
d) Production (including gardening, preserving food, doing home sewing)	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs

2. Do any of the following prevent you from doing farm work?	Yes	No
Lack of physical strength	1	2
Poor health	1	2
Lack of confidence	1	2
Lack of skill or knowledge	1	2
Lack of interest	1	2
Lack of time	1	2
Off-farm paid work	1	2
Off-farm unpaid work	1	2
Other (please specify) _____	1	2

3. Do any of the following prevent you from doing household work?	Yes	No
Lack of physical strength	1	2
Poor health	1	2
Lack of confidence	1	2
Lack of skill or knowledge	1	2
Lack of interest	1	2
Lack of time	1	2
Off-farm paid work	1	2
Off-farm unpaid work	1	2
Other (please specify) _____	1	2

We would like to know your opinions about your farm work. For each question please circle the number that best describes how you feel. (If you are NOT involved in farm work, please go to question 7).

4. How important to you is your farm work?

1	2	3	4	5
Unimportant				Extremely Important

5. How much personal satisfaction do you receive from your farm work?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Little Satisfaction				A Great Deal of Satisfaction

6. If there were no economic necessity, would you still want to do farm work?

1	2
Yes	No

We would also like to know your opinions about your household work. For each question please circle the number that best describes how you feel. (If you are NOT involved in household work, please go to question 10).

7. How important to you is your household work?

1	2	3	4	5
Unimportant				Extremely Important

8. How much personal satisfaction do you receive from your household work?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Little Satisfaction				A Great Deal of Satisfaction

9. If there were no economic necessity, would you still want to do household work?

1	2
Yes	No

We would like to know about your paid off-farm work.

10. In 1984 did you do any paid off-farm work? (If you had NO paid off-farm work in 1984, please go to question 21).

1	2
Yes	No

11. For each month in 1984 give the number of hours in which you did paid off-farm work.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs	____ hrs

12. What were your jobs? Please list the job title, eg., bus driver, carpenter.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

13. What was your total gross income from off-farm work in 1984?

$ _____

14. Please estimate the percentage of your off-farm income that went toward the following in 1984.

farm operation _____%
household operation _____%
other _____%

15. For how many years have you had off-farm work? _____ years

Now we would like to know your opinions about your off-farm work. Please circle the number that best describes how you feel.

16. How important to you was your off farm paid work?

1	2	3	4	5
Unimportant				Extremely Important

17. How much personal satisfaction did you receive from your off-farm paid work?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Little Satisfaction				A Great Deal of Satisfaction

18. If there were no economic necessity, would you still want to be involved in your off-farm work?

1	2
Yes	No

19. How important do you think your contribution of off-farm income was to the farm operation?

1	2	3	4	5
Unimportant				Extremely Important

20. How important do you think your contribution of off-farm income was to the operation of the household?

1	2	3	4	5
Unimportant				Extremely Important

The following questions are about the unpaid work you do off the farm.

21. In 1984 did you do any unpaid work such as volunteer activities in community, church, political, or farm-related organizations. (If you had NO volunteer activities in 1984, please go to question 24).

1	2
Yes	No

22. For each month in 1984, give the number of hours in which you did unpaid/volunteer work.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs

23. Please list the organizations and the work that you did in each.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

24. In 1984 did you do any other unpaid work for other people? Examples would be helping a neighbour with farm work or child care. (If NO, please go to question 27).

1	2
Yes	No

25. For each month in 1984, give the number of hours for which you did unpaid work for others.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs	___ hrs

26. Please list what you did.

_____ _____

_____ _____

Now we would like to know your opinions about your unpaid off-farm work. Please circle the number that best describes how you feel.

27. How important to you is your volunteer work?

1	2	3	4	5
Unimportant				Extremely Important

28. How much personal satisfaction do you receive from your volunteer work?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Little Satisfaction				A Great Deal of Satisfaction

The following questions ask how you feel about your various activities.

29. How often are you troubled about the following?

	Always Troubled 1	2	3	4	Never Troubled 5	Not Applicable 0
Neglecting:						
farm duties	1	2	3	4	5	0
household duties	1	2	3	4	5	0
off-farm paid work	1	2	3	4	5	0
volunteer work	1	2	3	4	5	0
Wanting to give more time to:						
farm	1	2	3	4	5	0
home	1	2	3	4	5	0
off-farm paid work	1	2	3	4	5	0
volunteer work	1	2	3	4	5	0
Not fulfilling expectations:						
of yourself	1	2	3	4	5	0
of others	1	2	3	4	5	0

The questions that follow are about your health. Please circle the number that best describes how often you have had each of the following experiences during the past year.

	Very Often 1	2	Sometimes 3	4	Never 5
30. Have you been taking prescription or nonprescription medication?	1	2	3	4	5
31. Have illness or accidents kept you from doing things you need or want to do?	1	2	3	4	5
32. How frequently have you visited the doctor?	1	2	3	4	5
33. Have you any trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep?	1	2	3	4	5
34. Have you been bothered by shortness of breath when you were not exercising or working hard?	1	2	3	4	5
35. Have you had fainting spells?	1	2	3	4	5
36. Have you been bothered by nervousness (irritable, fidgety, tense)?	1	2	3	4	5
37. Have you been so restless that you cannot sit still for long?	1	2	3	4	5
38. Have you sometimes felt that people are against you for no good reason?	1	2	3	4	5
39. Have you had worries that get you down physically?	1	2	3	4	5
40. Have you been worried by loneliness?	1	2	3	4	5

For each of the following questions please circle the answer that best describes your feelings.

	Strongly Agree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Disagree 5
41. I have little control over the things that happen to me.	1	2	3	4	5
42. There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have.	1	2	3	4	5
43. There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
44. I often feel helpless in dealing with problems of life.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Sometimes I feel that I'm being pushed around in life.	1	2	3	4	5
46. What happens to me in the future mostly depends on me.	1	2	3	4	5
47. I can do just about anything I set my mind to.	1	2	3	4	5

In this section are questions about your marriage. (If you are NOT married, please go to question 53.)

	Very Unsatisfied 1	2	3	4	Very Satisfied 5	Not Applicable 0
48. How satisfied are you with the amount of support or understanding your spouse gives you in regard to your						
farm work	1	2	3	4	5	0
household work	1	2	3	4	5	0
off-farm paid work	1	2	3	4	5	0
volunteer work	1	2	3	4	5	0

	Yes	No	Not Applicable
49. If your spouse objected strongly, would you still want to be involved in your			
farm work	1	2	0
household work	1	2	0
off-farm paid work	1	2	0
volunteer work	1	2	0

	Very Unsatisfied 1	2	3	4	Very Satisfied 5	Not Applicable 0
50. Overall, how satisfied are you with the amount of work your spouse contributes to						
the farm	1	2	3	4	5	0
the household	1	2	3	4	5	0

51. Overall, how satisfied are you with the way your spouse helps you cope with your tensions?

Very Unsatisfied 1	2	3	4	Very Satisfied 5	Not Applicable 0

52. Overall how satisfied are you with your marriage?

Very Unsatisfied 1	2	3	4	Very Satisfied 5	Not Applicable 0

And these questions ask about your friends.

53. Do you see your friends as often as you would like?

1 Yes	2 No

54. Overall, how satisfied are you with your friendships?

Very Unsatisfied 1	2	3	4	Very Satisfied 5	Not Applicable 0

55. Overall how satisfied are you with the way your friends help you cope with your tensions?

Very Unsatisfied 1	2	3	4	Very Satisfied 5	Not Applicable 0

The following questions are about farming in general.

56. Did you grow up on a farm?

_____ Yes
_____ No

If no, at what age did you begin farming? _____ years of age.

57. How satisfied are you with farming as a way of life?

Very Unsatisfied				Very Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

58. How satisfied are you with farming as a way to make a living?

Very Unsatisfied				Very Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

Finally, we would like some information about you.

59. How old are you? _____ years

60. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

_____ elementary
_____ junior high
_____ senior high
_____ technical/vocational training
_____ university degree (undergraduate)
_____ university degree (graduate)

61. What is your current marital status?

_____ married
_____ never married
_____ common law
_____ widowed
_____ separated
_____ divorced

62. How may children do you have? Please include children from second and subsequent marriages if applicable.

_____ children

63. Please complete the following information about your children.

Child	Sex Male-Female M	F	Age	Living at Home Yes - No Y	N
1	M	F	____	Y	N
2	M	F	____	Y	N
3	M	F	____	Y	N
4	M	F	____	Y	N
5	M	F	____	Y	N
6	M	F	____	Y	N
7	M	F	____	Y	N
8	M	F	____	Y	N
9	M	F	____	Y	N
10	M	F	____	Y	N

64. Including yourself, how many people are living in your home? ____ people

65. Aside from your spouse and children, does anyone else live in your home?

_____ Yes _____ No

66. If yes, please list the people and their relationship to you (eg. mother-in-law, brother, hired helper).

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION!

(Please use this space for additional comments).